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To: jgreis@fs.fed.us
cc:
Subject: Southern Forest Resource Assessment (SFRA).

01/24/02 09:14 PM

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to express my concern over a potentially missed opportunity to address ecological threats to the forests of the South East. Specifically, the draft of the Forest Service's Southern Forest Resource Assessment (SFRA) fails to address glaring threats to the biological integrity of the region as a whole, and to the natural function of the forests therein. The report's conclusion that forestry practices in the South are sustainable is not supported by the facts, nor is the contention that sprawl poses the larger threat to those forests.

The acreage of forest logged and converted to single-species pine plantations will be almost ten times that lost to sprawl by 2040. This conversion will also lead to a doubling of chemical application, much of it in the form of pesticides, in the forests. Despite these wholesale changes in habitat, the report fails to address the biological impact these activities will have on the plant or animal (including human) communities they support. In fact, it includes heavily managed pine plantations in its discussion of southern forests as if they were functioning components of an ecosystem, which they clearly are not.

Furthermore, the conclusion that most of the increase in pine plantation stems from abandoned agricultural fields is not borne out by the report's own data, which shows that 75% of existing pine plantations came at the expense of natural forests.

The report contradicts itself again when it concludes that the wood products industry provides stability to the region's economy. In fact, the report itself states that communities where the wood products industry is concentrated are economically worse off than other communities, and much more so than communities where outdoor recreation is concentrated. The type of logging occurring in this region precludes outdoor recreation-based economic activities.

Finally, the report's conclusion that the state of forestry in the region is sustainable can only be justified in terms of the demand for pulp. No support is offered to suggest that current logging rates are sustainable on an ecological basis, and indeed the report alludes to signs of localized unsustainable logging pressures.

It is my hope that further drafts of this report will reflect the true ecological stresses current logging regimens are placing on Southern forests and the biota they support. It is my opinion that such practices are not in the long term best interest of the region's environmental, ecological or economic health, despite the short-term profits that may be reaped by a small number of private lease and land holders.

Sincerely,
John Jacobson

Send and receive Hotmail on your mobile device: <http://mobile.msn.com>